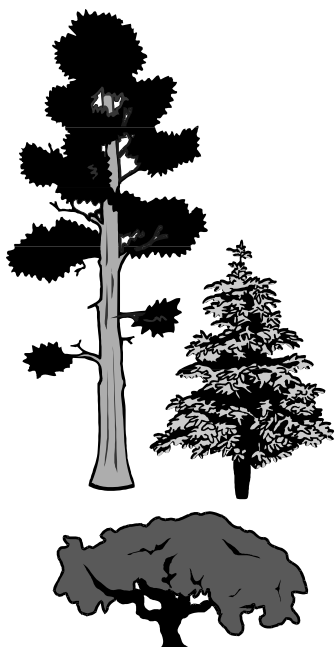




Plant Trees Carefully after a Hurricane



It is tempting to rush into tree planting efforts following a major natural disaster. This might appear to be the most prudent act to help the community feel a sense of recovery. However, in the hurry to bring about normalcy, mistakes can be made without a sound plan to follow. Many problems can be avoided by developing and implementing a sound plan with the help of professionals in urban forestry. These professionals can be found in private industry, the state Division of Forestry, and the Cooperative Extension Service. Call these groups in your community for their help.

Evaluate the Site, then Choose the Tree

Urban forestry professionals agree that thoughtful planning now can save thousands of maintenance dollars in the future. For example, past hurricanes have taught us that large-growing trees planted too close to curbs, sidewalks or buildings blow over easily. Therefore, it is best to plant these trees farther away, plant trees that stay small, or increase the size of the space allocated for tree root growth. For instance, experts recommend that parking lot islands should be at least 400 square feet in order to support adequate growth for one medium or large-maturing tree such as live oak.

Planting Tips

This may be a good time to re-evaluate the size of the root zones in urban areas traditionally provided for trees. Recent research and natural disasters have taught us that tree roots need much larger soil spaces for strong, stable growth than previously thought. Strong root growth is essential for tree stability and good health.

Thoroughly evaluate the above ground and below ground conditions at the planting site. Select a tree that is suited for these conditions. Computer programs available through the Cooperative Extension Service can assist in this process. Your state Division of Forestry and private consultants are also excellent sources of

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information. A brief call to one of these professionals can be very rewarding. Do not select the species first, then attempt to squeeze the trees into every planting site in your area.



Select from a number of different species. Urban foresters suggest that no more than 20% of the trees in a community should be from the same genus (e.g., oak), and no more than 10% percent from the same species (e.g., live oak). This helps protect from catastrophic insect or disease infestations. In addition, eliminate weak-wooded trees, such as earleaf acacia, from your recommended tree list.

Select good quality nursery stock. Be sure to purchase trees that meet your state's Division of Plant Industry's Grades and Standards. This will reduce pruning requirements in the years following planting, and help ensure that the trees are structurally sound when they reach the planting site. Urban forestry professionals can offer guidance on selecting structurally sound trees. Price alone is not a good measure of quality.

Plant just before the start of the rainy season. This will reduce, but not eliminate, the need for irrigation.

Do not plant if you cannot provide adequate aftercare. Determine if you have the available resources to provide irrigation and pruning of newly planted trees. Most trees need to be regularly watered for about 4 months for each inch of trunk diameter to become well established. For example, a 2-inch diameter tree needs about 8 months of regular irrigation. Trees on a regular pruning and thinning schedule survive hurricanes and other wind storms better than unpruned trees.